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## Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O Lord God, the almighty and the all-wise, Your judgments and ways are past finding out.

Bless our Senators with strength sufficient for today's challenges, illuminating their paths with Your light. May they walk in the way of integrity and sacrifice. Lord, let Your power purify their thoughts as Your truth guides their words. Teach them to cheerfully do Your will, surrounding them with the shield of Your providential love. Use them to fulfill Your purposes for our Nation and humanity.

We pray in Your powerful Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAWLEY). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

### EXECUTIVE SESSION

### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will pro-

ceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Bridget S. Bade, of Arizona, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

### MIDWESTERN FLOODS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to share a message from Iowa's heartland.

As you know, millions of Americans in the middle of the country are experiencing catastrophic flooding. My home State of Iowa and our neighbors in Nebraska are particularly hard hit, and it will affect others downriver of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers.

I want to thank the Trump administration for its swift response on Saturday to approve the expedited requests for a major disaster declaration made by Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds Thursday evening. The flooding has caused tremendous damage, impacting more than two-thirds of Iowa's 99 counties. The Federal disaster proclamation will trigger emergency assistance to 56 of those counties so far. Those would be the counties in blue on the map here.

Governor Reynolds' team has been in the trenches, working hand in hand with local officials and county emergency coordinators. They estimated damages so far across our entire State to be \$1.6 billion. The damages estimated for agriculture are \$214 million; damages to homes, \$481 million; and levee repairs, \$525 million.

By all accounts and every possible metric, the damages and devastation are overwhelming. Yet, at the very same time, the legendary mythology of America's heartland and its people is rooted in truth. The road to recovery will be long, grueling, and at times gruesome, but I am confident that the grit and resilience of Iowans and their fellow midwesterners will prevail.

Over the last week, we have heard remarkable stories of neighbor helping

neighbor and neighbors helping total strangers. Residents of all ages and differing abilities rubbed elbows to bag sand to save a water treatment facility in their small town. First responders and Good Samaritans rescued people stranded in their homes. Farmers moved their neighbor's grain and livestock to higher ground. Volunteers rolled up their sleeves to serve hot meals and deliver water. Generous Americans across our country opened their wallets to donate money, food, water, hygiene products, and medical supplies. Iowa farmers who were not wiped out by the floods are sending truckloads of much needed hay to livestock producers and ranchers in Nebraska.

These stories offer a glimmer of sunshine in the darkest hours of the 2019 floods. You might say that we are experiencing an unwelcome twist of March Madness along the Missouri River. Despite being mired in muck and mud, it is reassuring to see the full-court press and gritty resilience of midwesterners.

Make no mistake—the catastrophic damages to private property, farmland, Main Street businesses, public utilities, and critical infrastructure, including wells, roads, bridges, and railways, have extended beyond the capability of local and State government.

Aerial footage of our State makes entire communities and farmsteads look like an island surrounded by an ocean. You can see some of that here in this photo that was taken just last week. You see here a small community along the Missouri River. This is the town of Pacific Junction, which is located in the southwestern corner of the State in Mills County. Its entire population was forced to evacuate. As you can see from this photo, the rooftops of homes appear to be floating in the muddy waters of a Monopoly board.

I ask my colleagues here in the Senate and I ask Americans listening at home to put yourselves in the shoes of those evacuated from their homes.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Imagine if this were your home soaking in unsanitary water for days on end. Consider for a moment the damages to your furniture, clothes, appliances, and your most prized possessions. Think how much it would cost to replace those items. Now add up the countless hours of hard work it would take to clean up the mess, mud, muck, and mold once the water finally recedes.

I have another photo here I want you to look at. Let's now turn to a photo taken near Pacific Junction.

I thank Larry Winum of Glenwood, IA, a constituent and a friend, for sharing these photos.

Just think of the small businesses impacted by the floods. The photo here of a motel illustrates how flooding can wash away the livelihoods of business owners and their employees. This particular business will indefinitely have zero occupancy. Even if the roads were open, this business would need a floor-to-ceiling refurbishment to replace beds, linens, carpets, and towels, and most likely even significant plumbing and electrical work.

I want to show a photo of Main Street in Hamburg, IA. This community was hard hit in 2011. I was there in 2011. It is worse now. You can see it is underwater in 2019.

Let's examine how the flooding has affected our farmers. As a lifelong farmer, I know exactly what farmers across my State are feeling at this time of the year. They get very antsy and keep constant watch on the weather, soil temperatures, and planting conditions for their seed. They have ordered seeds and fertilizers. These farmers are chomping at the bit to get started on field work.

Now imagine the farmers along the Missouri River. Tens of thousands of acres of farmland are underwater. For sure, these acres may never be ready for planting this season.

Now consider the farmers who were storing grain in the bins along the Missouri. Millions of bushels of flood-soaked grain have spilled into murky floodwaters.

This picture says it all. This is grain that farmers were counting on to pay the bills to put this year's crop in the ground. This photo was shared courtesy of State Representative David Sieck, whose legislative district is almost completely impacted by the flood damages. I thank David for sharing.

My State staff tells me that some farmers in the flooded areas didn't get last fall's crop fully harvested, and of course that is destroyed.

Since March 12, my staff has been crisscrossing scores of Iowa counties to visit affected communities and meet directly with Iowans. They are sharing directly with me the feedback from Iowans. I am making plans to visit affected areas as soon as I can as well. I am anxious to measure recovery and cleanup efforts to inform my decisions on tax and spending policies that are needed to help with recovery efforts going forward.

As my speech and these photos suggest to all and I hope will suggest to each of my colleagues here in the Senate, we have a long road to recovery from the floods of 2019. In fact, it could be worse. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued a wake-up call last week. We are not yet out of the woods—not by a long shot. With more precipitation, snowmelt, saturated soils, frozen ground, and massive ice jams, we are in store for significant spring flooding that may reach 200 million Americans.

Today, I have talked largely about the extent of damages and the recovery efforts that are just getting started. It is also important to talk about flood mitigation. Breached, overtopped, or compromised levees span hundreds of miles on the Missouri River along the States of Iowa, Nebraska, and Missouri.

It took a long time for these communities to recover from flooding that took place 8 years ago. It is no wonder an awful lot of Iowans are feeling like they are way back to square one again.

Iowans, especially those who live along the Missouri River, want and deserve answers. Southwest Iowa communities have raised grave concern about the unresponsive Corps of Engineers—specifically, about the lack of communication and about not enough river dredging, water release, and about ordering the town of Hamburg, back in 2011, to remove reinforcements of the now-breached levee that left the town under water.

I, too, share the concerns that have been expressed to the Corps of Engineers. I have had a chance to talk to the Corps headquarters in Omaha. For years I have worked with several of my midwestern colleagues along the Missouri River to make flood control the No. 1 priority of the Corps.

It seems to me that misguided decisions and misplaced priorities have eclipsed common sense. As I told you, I talked last week with the commander of the Corps in Omaha and shared my concerns about the lack of communication and coordination with local communities. Perhaps a good scrubbing of the Master Manual of the Corps of Engineers for the Missouri River may help to clear the wax out of bureaucratic ears that haven't gotten the message.

The No. 1 priority of the Corps should be flood control—flood control, period. I started out today by saying that I wanted to share a message from America's heartland. I close my remarks by sending a message to that American heartland.

As Iowa's senior Senator, I will stand with you every step of the way. My staff and I are working very closely with Iowa and midwestern congressional delegations, the Trump administration, and State agencies to make sure disaster relief programs are working effectively for homeowners, small businesses, farmers, and our local communities.

The best I thing I can say to any Federal Agency and their employees, the Corps of Engineers, FEMA, and many others is to use a little common sense and cut out a lot of the redtape, but here is where it ends.

When the going gets tough, Iowans get tougher. So hang tough, keep fighting, and know that help is on the way.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MUELLER REPORT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as the world now knows, yesterday evening Attorney General Barr sent a letter to Congress on the investigation by the special counsel. In his letter, Attorney General Barr confirmed the intelligence community's assessment that through a coordinated disinformation campaign and hacking operations, Russia sought to interfere with the 2016 election. Any attempts by a foreign government to interfere with our Democratic processes, successful or unsuccessful, must not be taken lightly.

Though the special counsel's investigation was very targeted and specific, Members of the Senate Intelligence Committee, on which I serve, continue our work to more closely examine the matter as well as the broader threats posed by foreign interference as part of our oversight responsibilities. Although this was the major focus of the special counsel's investigation, it was not the most anticipated portion of Mr. Mueller's report.

After reviewing the special counsel's findings, the Attorney General concluded that the Trump campaign did not coordinate with the Russian Government in their efforts to influence the election. Based on their reaction since General Barr released his letter, it is clear the partisans who will never be satisfied with any results of an investigation will not be appeased by this report from the special counsel or General Barr's summary of Mr. Mueller's conclusions.

I hope our colleagues will trust the dedicated team of public servants who investigated this matter for the special counsel and now allow Congress to move on so we can deal with other challenges facing the American people. The worst thing we can do is get bogged down in a relitigation of all these issues over which we have no real authority because Congress's role is to conduct oversight for purposes of determining whether the laws have been faithfully executed or whether changes in the law need to occur. Obviously, the special counsel's role is entirely different. It is a criminal investigation